

Head-of-the-River M.E. Church
Head-of-the-River, Near Tuckahoe
Atlantic County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-274

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
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Head-of-the-River M.E. Church
Head-of-the-River, Near Tuckahoe
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Owner: Congregation of the Head-of-the-River Church

Date of Erection: Dedicated in 1792, completed
in 1813

Architect:

Builder: Members of the congregation

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One and gallery

Materials of Construction: Foundation - brick piers

Exterior walls - frame
construction

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch with asbestos
shingles over wood

Historical Data:

The first Methodist in this section was Mr. James who came in the winter of 1780. It was difficult for the ministers of this faith because they were sent from London and forced to swear allegiance to the King before they could start; the patriots were not kindly disposed towards them.

However, a society was formed to meet regularly at Hunter's Mill near the settlement of Head-of-the-River. During the early years, the society had no permanent headquarters. Arrangements were made to hold regular services in the mill of Jeremiah and William Smith.

It was during the time that Benjamin Abbott rode the Salem Circuit that the present church was started on a small part of the Benezet property.

The congregation erected their own church, following the pattern of their houses. This structure was dedicated in 1792 when Benjamin Abbott left the circuit. After this interest lagged, and it was not until 1813 that the building was completed.

The building has been changed but slightly since its erection. The outside resembles a plain farm house. The interior is almost a square room; around the three sides run wide galleries leaving a small opening in the center. The pulpit is directly in front of this opening and is so high that the preacher stands looking almost directly into the faces of the people in the gallery. The seats are plain pine benches; those in the gallery are backless, but the luxury of backs has been added to those downstairs. The structure is heated by two ancient wooden stoves, one at each side of the building. The pipes from the stoves circulate in the room and enter one chimney in the center.

During the years when the work on the building lagged, Francis Asbury, the first bishop of the Methodist Church of America preached there several times. In his journal under date of

"Monday, April 17, 1809, at Port Elizabeth", he says "at Tuckahoe Chapel my subject was Ephesians 3:8 I sat down and taught with pleasure. I dined with N. Swain. Richard has gone to his reward. The people told me that my absence on this path was twenty-five years." This would seem to indicate that he had preached there about 1784, before any attempt had been made to start the present building.

There is a very interesting cemetery connected with this church. Burials were made in it from 1793 on.

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